IND.

KID COLT OUTLAW

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

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THE STRANGEST FOE THE KID HAS EVER FACED...

"THE GHOST OF MIDNIGHT MOUNTAIN!"

A NOVEL-LENGTH THRILLER IN TWO SMASHING CHAPTERS!

THIS IS *ONE* TIME YOUR GUNS CANNOT HELP YOU, KID COLT!! YOU ARE *DOOMED!!*

IT'S THE *GHOST!!* NOW THERE'S *NO ESCAPE!!*

KIRBY AND ANIS

KID COLT OUTLAW

"THE GHOST of MIDNIGHT MOUNTAIN!"

SO **THIS** IS THE TOWN OF RED ROCK... AND THAT MUST BE **MIDNIGHT MOUNTAIN** YONDER! I HEARD TELL HOW THAT MOUNTAIN IS SUPPOSED TO BE HAUNTED! SOME DAY, MAYBE I'LL—

WHA—? THOSE JASPERS COMIN' TOWARD ME! THEY'RE **SHOOTIN'** AT ME! BUT THEY DON'T LOOK LIKE A **POSSE!**

BLAM!

CRACK!

CHAPTER ONE:

"TRAPPED ON MIDNIGHT MOUNTAIN!"

MIDNIGHT MOUNTAIN! FOR MILES AROUND, THE VERY MENTION OF THAT NAME BROUGHT SHIVERS RUNNING DOWN THE SPINES OF THE BRAVEST MEN IN RED ROCK! **MIDNIGHT MOUNTAIN,** WHERE NO MAN DARED TO SPEND A NIGHT! **MIDNIGHT MOUNTAIN,** HOME OF GHOSTS, AND STRANGE SPIRITS FROM ANOTHER WORLD! HOW WOULD MIDNIGHT MOUNTAIN AFFECT THE LIFE OF **KID COLT?** LET'S FIND **OUT...**

Stan Lee and JACK KELLER

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TAKEN BY SURPRISE, BEFORE THE KID COULD FIRE BACK, ONE OF THE SPEEDING HORSEMEN'S BULLETS STRUCK THE LEAN ADVENTURER IN HIS SHOULDER...

UGH! MY SHOULDER...

YUH HIT THAT HOMBRE, CALEB!

HE SHOULDA KEPT OUTTA OUR WAY!

STOP TALKIN' AND **RIDE!**

STEEL BOY, **NOBODY** RIDES THAT FAST 'LESS'N SOMEONE'S **CHASING** 'EM, AND IF THERE'S A POSSE COMIN', I DON'T WANT 'EM TO FIND **ME** HERE!

THAT'S IT, FELLA! PULL ME OVER TO THE SIDE OF THE ROAD -- BEHIND THOSE BUSHES! **HURRY, BOY!**

NOT A MINUTE TOO SOON! I WAS **RIGHT!** HERE COMES A POSSE **NOW!**

IT'S NO USE, SHERIFF! WE'LL NEVER FIND 'EM!

MEBBE NOT, BUT WE'RE SHORE GONNA KEEP **TRYIN'!**

STEEL—I-I'M GONNA PASS OUT--EVERYTHING'S GOIN' BLACK...

WHOA, BOYS! WAIT! LOOKY HERE! A HOSS!

RECKON WE BETTER HAVE A LOOK-SEE, SHERIFF!

IT MAY HAVE BEEN MINUTES LATER—OR MAYBE **HOURS**-- BUT WHEN THE KID FINALLY OPENED HIS EYES AGAIN, HE SAW A SIGHT HE HADN'T SEEN MANY TIMES BEFORE IN HIS DRAMATIC LIFE! THE BARS OF A PRISON CELL... FROM **INSIDE** THE CELL!

WHA-WHAT HAPPENED? WHERE AM I? IT-IT'S A **CELL!**

I THOUGHT YUH'D **NEVER** WAKE UP, KID! TAKE A GOOD LOOK AT THIS CELL! YOU'RE GONNA BE SEEIN' A **LOT** OF IT FROM NOW ON!

MY SHOULDER! WHAT-?

LIE DOWN THERE, HOMBRE! YOU'RE LUCKY! THE DOC WAS ABLE TO GIT THE BULLET OUT AND PATCH YUH UP LIKE NEW!

LET'S STOP WASTIN' TIME, SHERIFF! LET **ME** MAKE HIM TELL US WHERE HIS **PARTNERS** ARE HIDIN'!

PARDS? **WHAT** PARDS?

DON'T TRY TO PLAY INNOCENT WITH **US,** KID! WE KNOW NOW THAT YOU'RE THE HEAD OF THE GANG THAT'S **BEEN ROBBIN'** OUR BANK AND OUR HOMES IN THESE PARTS! I SHOULDA GUESSED THERE WOULD **HAVETA** BE SOME BIG OPERATOR LIKE KID COLT BEHIND IT!

SHERIFF, I DON'T LIKE THE LOOK OF THE MOB OUTSIDE! THEY'RE GETTIN' KINDA MEAN!

WHAT ARE WE **WAITIN'** FOR? WE CAUGHT KID COLT! LET'S **PUNISH** 'IM NOW!

WE'LL MAKE 'IM RETURN THAT MONEY TO US!

YEAH! JUST LET US AT 'IM!

SHERIFF

SHERIFF, LISTEN TO ME! I ADMIT I'M KID COLT! BUT I DON'T KNOW ANY-THING ABOUT ANY ROBBERIES! I'VE NEVER **BEEN** IN THESE PARTS BEFORE! I WAS JUST RIDIN' THRU!

ALL RIGHT, KID! IF WE HAVE TA CATCH YORE PARDS THE **HARD** WAY, WE WILL! NOW THAT WE GOT **YOU,** IT WON'T TAKE LONG TO CATCH **THEM!**

SHERIFF, THE MOB IS GETTIN' A **BATTERING RAM!** WE GOTTA **DO** SOMETHIN'!

QUICK, WE'LL DUCK OUT THE BACK DOOR WITH THE KID AND TAKE HIM TO THE COUNTY SEAT! NO ORNERY MOB IS GONNA GET **MY** PRISONER FROM ME!

YOU **HEARD** THE SHERIFF, MISTER! GET MOVIN'!

QUICK! INTO THE BUCKBOARD!

MOVE, MISTER!

OPEN UP! WE KNOW YORE IN THERE!

BY THE TIME THEY REALIZE WHAT'S HAPPENED, WE'LL BE HALF WAY TO THE COUNTY SEAT!

SHERIFF, YOU GOTTA **LISTEN** TO ME! I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT ROBBIN' ANY BANK-- OR ABOUT ANY GANG! YOU'RE MAKIN' A BIG MISTAKE! IF YOU TAKE ME TO THE COUNTY SEAT, WITH **MY** REPUTATION, THEY'LL LOCK ME UP AND THROW AWAY THE KEY!

YOU'LL **STILL** BE BETTER OFF THAN IF THAT MOB GETS YOU BACK THERE!

NOW BUTTON UP YOUR MOUTH, HOMBRE! IT'S ABOUT **TIME** THE LAW TOOK YOU INTO TOW!

SHERIFF, YOU'RE A GOOD MAN, AND YOU'RE DOIN' WHAT YOU THINK IS RIGHT! SO I HATE TO DO THIS!

HATE TO DO WHAT?

THIS!

HEY!

THE KID'S WONDERFUL INBORN SENSE OF TIMING HAD MADE HIM PICK THE PERFECT SECOND FOR AN ATTACK! THE SHERIFF **HAD** TO HOLD ONTO THE REINS AT THAT INSTANT, FOR THE BUCKBOARD WAS GOING AROUND A DANGEROUS HAIRPIN TURN IN THE ROAD! AND THAT WAS ALL THE KID NEEDED TO GIVE HIM THE CHANCE TO REACH FOR THE LAWMAN'S OWN GUN!

DON'T MOVE, SHERIFF! **I'VE** GOT THE WHIPHAND NOW!

STEEL! GOOD BOY! I **KNEW** YOU'D FOLLOW WHEREVER I WAS!

KID, WHAT ARE YOU GONNA **DO?** YOU CAN'T SHOOT ME IN COLD BLOOD!

NO **WONDER** PEOPLE FEAR ME SO, IF **THAT'S** THE KIND OF REPUTATION THAT'S GROWN UP AROUND ME! I'VE **NEVER** SHOT A MAN EXCEPT IN SELF-DEFENSE, SHERIFF! AND EVEN **THEN,** I AIM ONLY TO WING 'EM!

NO, YOU CAN GO BACK AND PICK UP YOUR DEPUTY NOW! WITH **STEEL** UNDER ME, YOU'LL NEVER CATCH ME AGAIN!

HE'S **RIGHT!** NOTHIN' ON FOUR LEGS COULD CATCH THAT GREY BOLT OF LIGHTNING! WELL, MEBBE **I** LOST HIM-- BUT AT LEAST THE **MOB** DIDN'T GET 'IM!

RIDE, STEEL BOY! **AWAY!**

CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE...

GOLDEN TRAIL

THE first stagecoach line in Blucher county ran from Wynnville down the Gold-Dust Trail to Goldbank, Ellentown and the in-between settlements, from 1870. The Gold-Dust Trail wasn't known as that before 1870, but carried only the usual passengers and merchandise heading toward California and Oregon, and dropping off only the usual stragglers who settled along likely, well-watered spots and became, eventually, cattlemen of great power and influence. Between 1870 and 1875 there were seven major attempts at stage-coach robbery, five of which failed due to the intrepidity of the drivers. Their cleverness and readiness in emergencies became a legend along the Trail. After 1875 there were no further attempts until 1880, at which time there was a big gold strike in Goldbank (founded in the same year, and named for it). The gold industry developed into a big one for a time and there were more attempts at stagecoach robberies. Without exception they were frustrated.

In Goldbank the bigger ore veins quickly ran out, but many smaller ones continued to be uncovered. In the meantime, cattle and sheep ranching increased along the Gold-Dust Trail, with the railroad never far behind. Gold mining and panning dwindled in importance, though it did not die out completely.

Finally the railroad came through from Blucher County border where it had been halted for some five years. It went on through Wynnville to Ellentown and far beyond. That was in 1889. In January of 1890 the last spikes were driven, and the cars were set to make the first trip on April 16th of that year.

April 12th marked the last trip of the sturdy old Wynnville stagecoach. When it rolled up to the Ellenville depot in front of the hotel for the last time, there were plans for retiring it honorably as a historical object of great value.

What made its final trip of great interest was the sudden run of currency on the Ellentown bank, due to very heavy cash borrowing by cattlemen occasioned by the disastrous spring floods. A hurried telegram was dispatched to the assay office at Goldbank for enough gold dust to back a temporary issue of bank scrip. The scrip would enable ranchers to purchase everything they needed without the necessity of paying interest on loaned money. The scrip itself would be redeemable in regular gold currency when the supply became normal again.

The Goldbank sheriff, Dan Clerihew, was notified by the assay office of the shipment. He went over to the office and discussed it.

Clark, the assay man, pointed to a couple of heavy sacks, each the size of a small melon.

"There it is," he said.

"What's it worth?" Clerihew asked.

The assay man consulted his books.

"A little over twelve thousand dollars," he said.

Sheriff Clerihew shook his head.

"You'd better wait for the train," he said. "It'll be only four days until the cars roll, and then you'll have nothing to worry about."

It was Clark's turn to shake his head.

"The Ellentown bank can't wait that long," he said. "They've got their scrip ready to issue, but the banking laws won't let them hand out a single scrip greenback until the gold's in the bank vault. And those cattlemen are yammering for cash!"

Clerihew frowned.

"All right," he said reluctantly. "But *you* know there's a risk, and *I* know there's a risk. This is the last scheduled run of the stagecoach. We've had no holdups lately, but an owlhoot may think this too good a chance to miss. If there are any dry-gulchin' galoots . . ."

"The whole thing has been conducted with the greatest secrecy," Clark insisted. "Only a very few people could know about it."

The sheriff smiled.

"That secret stopped being one the minute it hit the telegraph wires. People talk . . . they can't help it. I'll bet I could walk up to any man in Goldbank and he'd know the shipment was going through. In fact . . ." He glanced toward the door. "Right now, for all we know, somebody is watching this office, to see how much gold goes out. Tomorrow, when the coach leaves, they'll be watching. Remember, I can't go with the coach . . . not with a trial at the county courthouse!"

"The coach will be carrying passengers," Clark said. "Some will be armed. And the driver will be armed."

"Old Stan, eh?" Clerihew mused. "I'd almost forgotten that. Stan's reliable and he's a good hand with a Winchester."

"I've never seen him fire a gun," Clark said, smiling.

"That's why he's a good hand

CONTINUED

A QUARTER OF AN HOUR LATER...

WHOA, STEEL BOY! WE'LL BE SAFE NOW, LEASTWAYS FOR A **SPELL!** BUT WHAT'LL WE **DO?** IF WE KEEP RIDIN', WE'LL END UP BACK IN RED ROCK! AND IF WE TURN TAIL, WE'LL RUN INTO THE SHERIFF AGAIN!

RECKON THERE'S ONLY **ONE** THING WE CAN DO--

THE ONE PLACE **NO** ONE WILL COME AFTER US IS-- **MIDNIGHT MOUNTAIN!** IF MY **GUNS** WON'T KEEP HOMBRES AWAY, THE FEAR OF **GHOSTS** SURE WILL!

BRRR, I CAN **SEE** HOW THIS PLACE GOT A REP FOR BEIN' HAUNTED! EVERYTHING ABOUT IT SEEMS COLD AND EERIE! YOU CAN ALMOST **FEEL** UNSEEN EYES UPON YOU!

SUDDENLY, WITHOUT WARNING, STEEL REARS BACK NERVOUSLY, WHINNYING IN **FEAR!**

STEEL! YOU NEVER DID **THAT** BEFORE! WHAT **IS** IT, BOY?? WHAT DO YOU **SEE?**

NEIGHHH!

THAT'S IT! THAT BLACK SHADOW! COMIN' TOWARD US! B-BUT WHAT **IS** IT? WHAT CAN BE CAUSIN' IT? **NOTHING** IS MOVING HERE --EXCEPT US?

NEIGHHH!

THIS CAVE! LET'S DUCK INTO HERE UNTIL WE CAN FIGGER OUT WHAT'S HAPPENING! I-I DON'T **LIKE** ANY OF THIS! I'VE NEVER BEEN AFEARED OF **MEN** FACIN' ME! BUT WHAT DO YOU DO AGAINST THINGS YOU CAN'T SEE...OR **TOUCH?**

IT'S MIGHTY DARK IN HERE, BUT I RECKON I'M A MITE TOO OLD TO START BEING SCARED OF THE DARK!

RRRRRR

WHAT'S THAT?

THAT **ROCK!** IT'S STARTIN' TO COVER THE CAVE MOUTH! WE'LL BE **TRAPPED** IN HERE!

IT'S NO USE! I CAN'T BUDGE IT! BUT HOW DID IT MOVE? I DIDN'T SEE A LIVIN' SOUL! AND A ROCK CAN'T MOVE ITSELF!

SUDDENLY, THE KID'S FANTASTIC SIXTH-SENSE MADE HIM WHEEL ABOUT AGAIN! ALTHOUGH HE HEARD NOTHING-- ALTHOUGH HE **SAW** NOTHING-- KID COLT **KNEW** THAT HE AND STEEL WERE **NOT ALONE** IN THAT CAVE!

?

SOMEONE'S THERE! I **KNOW** IT! WHO **IS** IT? SPEAK UP! SPEAK OR I'LL **SHOOT!**

FOOL! YOUR BULLETS WOULD BE USELESS ... AGAINST **ME!**

A--GHOST!

Chapter 2

The SECRET of MIDNIGHT MOUNTAIN!

DROP YOUR GUN, MORTAL! IT IS **USELESS** TO RESIST!

IT-- IT'S **IMPOSSIBLE!** IT CAN'T BE! I DON'T **BELIEVE IT!** B-BUT I CAN'T BRING MYSELF TO FIRE! SOMETHING IS STOPPING ME FROM SHOOTING!

SUDDENLY PIERCING THE DEEP GLOOM OF THE MYSTERIOUS CAVE, A BLAZING LIGHT FLASHED IN THE KID'S EYES- BLINDING HIM MOMENTARILY!

MY EYES! I CAN'T SEE!

AND SHORT SECONDS LATER, WHEN THE LIGHT WAS GONE, THE GHOST HAD VANISHED, TOO!

WHAT **WAS** THAT? WHAT'S **HAPPENING** HERE? THE **GHOST**-- IT'S **GONE!**

STUMBLING, GRAPPLING, GROPING, NEVER LETTING HIS FEAR PREVENT HIM FROM DOING WHAT HAD TO BE DONE, THE KID BEGAN TO SEARCH THE CAVE!

THERE'S **GOT** TO BE AN ANSWER! **NOBODY** CAN JUST VANISH! HE **COULDN'T** JUST COME THRU THE WALL! **HE COULDN'T!**

AND SUDDENLY, THE KID'S PROBING FINGERS FOUND A BEND IN THE INNER CAVE WALL... CAUTIOUSLY HE WALKED FORWARD, ROUNDING THE BEND, UNTIL...

YOU **HAD** YOUR WARNING! NOW YOU **PERISH!**

THREE GHOSTS!

NONE CAN SAY HOW MANY SUPERSTITIOUS COWBOYS FROM THE FRONTIER WEST WOULD HAVE HAD THE COURAGE TO DO WHAT KID COLT DID AT THAT SPLIT SECOND! WITHOUT HESITATING, WITHOUT ANY WARNING, THE VICTIM BECAME THE ATTACKER! KID COLT PLUNGED TOWARD THE FOREBODING FIGURES!

IF I'M GONNA PERISH LIKE YOU SAY, I MIGHT AS WELL GO DOWN **FIGHTING!**

YOU'RE NO GHOST! THAT WAS A REAL HUMAN **CHIN** I JUST HIT!

HE'S **WISE** TO US! DON'T LET 'IM LEAVE HERE ALIVE!

DON'T WORRY CALEB! **HE WON'T!**

CALEB? THE NAME I HEARD WHEN I WAS SHOT, RIDING INTO RED ROCK! **OF COURSE!** YOU THREE ARE THE ONES WHO RODE PAST ME AND SHOT ME IN THE SHOULDER!

MISTER, THAT BIT OF KNOWLEDGE ISN'T GONNA DO YOU **ONE** BIT OF GOOD **NOHOW!**

YES IT **IS!** I ALWAYS LIKE TO **KNOW** WHO I'M FIGHTING!

IT'S TOO CRAMPED IN HERE! I'LL HAVE **A BETTER CHANCE** IF I CAN LURE THEM BACK TOWARD THE FRONT OF THE CAVE!

HE'S GETTING **AWAY!**

DON'T BE A FOOL! WE'VE GOT 'IM **TRAPPED!** JUST TAKE THESE BLACK SHEETS OFF, SO WE DON'T GET ALL TANGLED UP WHEN WE GO AFTER 'IM AGAIN!

IT MUST HAVE BEEN **THEM** WHO SILENTLY PUSHED THAT BOULDER -- AND THEY SOMEHOW CAUSED THAT SHADOW ON THE MOUNTAINSIDE! BUT **WHY** WOULD THEY **WANT TO SCARE PEOPLE AWAY FROM HERE?**

OF COURSE! THE STOLEN GOLD! IT MUST BE **HIDDEN** HERE -- WHERE IT'S SAFE! I **HEAR** THEM! THEY'RE COMING TO ATTACK ME ALL AT ONCE NOW! WELL, I'M **READY** FOR 'EM!

ALL RIGHT, BOYS! ALL TOGETHER! **GET 'IM!**

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CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE.

FOR THE FIRST FEW SECONDS, EVERYBODY FIRED BLINDLY, GUESSING AT THEIR FOE, AS THE SHADOWS LENT CONCEALMENT TO THEM ALL!

SO FAR SO GOOD! BUT I CAN'T STAND UP TO THE **THREE** OF 'EM FOREVER IN HERE! IF ONLY I KNEW HOW TO **MOVE** THIS BLAMED ROCK!

WAIT-- **I HAVE IT! STEEL! STEEL BOY!**

POW! PINNG BLAM

RA-POW!

QUICK, OLD PARD! PUT YOUR HOOVES AGAINST THAT ROCK AND PUSH! THAT'S IT, STEEL! **GOOD FELLA!**

KA-POW!!

HE'S GETTIN' OUT OF THE CAVE! HE'LL GET AWAY!

RELAX! THERE'S **NOT A CHANCE!** THERE'S A SHEER ONE-THOUSAND FOOT DROP OUTSIDE THERE! ONE MISSTEP AND HE'S FINISHED!

CALEB, **LOOK!** HE MUSTA STEPPED OFF THE EDGE, LIKE YOU SAID! HE AIN'T HERE!

GOOD! THAT'LL SAVE US THE TROUBLE OF **GETTIN' RID OF HIM OURSELVES!**

GUESS AGAIN, HOMBRES!

THE KID!

THIS IS IT, CALEB!

BRAVELY, VALIANTLY, THE ALMOST-LEGENDARY OWLHOOT BATTLED THE THREE DESPERADOES, BUT THE ODDS WERE TOO GREAT EVEN FOR HIS STOUT HEART! HIS RECENTLY WOUNDED SHOULDER COULDN'T STAND THE PUNISHMENT, AND SOON...

THAT'S IT, BOYS! KEEP HAMMERIN' AT HIM!

WE GOT HIM!

THAT VINE! I'VE GOT TO GET IT!!

HE'S SAFE! HE'S HANGING ONTO A VINE DOWN THERE!

WELL, DON'T JUST TALK ABOUT IT! CUT THE VINE!

AND THEN, ONE OF THE MOST FANTASTIC EXHIBITIONS OF MARKSMANSHIP EVER RECORDED TOOK PLACE! WHILE DANGLING A THOUSAND FEET OVER AN ABYSS WITH ONE HAND, SWAYING IN THE MOUNTAIN WIND, IN THE GLOOM OF NIGHT--WITH ONLY THE MOONLIGHT TO GUIDE HIM, HE COLT SHOT THE KNIFE RIGHT OUT OF THE HAND OF THE MAN WHO ATTEMPTED TO CUT THE VINE!

MY KNIFE!

POW!

THE K'D'S NEXT SHOT PLANNED BY THE FINEST FIGHTING MAN THE WEST HAD EVER PRODUCED, STRUCK THE LEDGE ABOVE, RICOCHETTED OFF THE STONE ENBANKMENT, AND PUT THE SECOND OWLHOOT OUT OF ACTION!

MUH ARM!

IT AIN'T POSSIBLE! NO HOMBRE CAN SHOOT LIKE THAT!

HIS GUN'S EMPTY! HE CAN'T RELOAD WHILE HE'S HANGIN' ON WITH ONE HAND! I'LL FINISH HIM OFF NOW!

I'M... OUT OF SHELLS!

AND THEN, UNEXPECTEDLY, THE STRANGEST THING OF ALL HAPPENED! CALEB DROPPED THE BOULDER HARMLESSLY AT HIS FEET.. AS SOMETHING IN THE CAVE CAUSED HIM TO LET OUT AN EAR SPLITTING YELL!

NO-- NOOOOOO!!

CALEB!

SECONDS LATER THE KID HAD CLIMBED TO SAFETY, TO FIND THE OTHER TWO OWLHOOTS UNCONSCIOUS, MUTE FEAR WRITTEN ON THEIR FACES!

SOMEONE, OR SOMETHING SCARED THESE JASPERS MOST OUT OF THEIR WITS! BUT WHAT?! THERE'S NOTHING HERE NOW -AND THERE'S NO TRACKS! ANYTHING LIVING, HUMAN OR BEAST, LEAVES TRAC[illegible]!

THE SHERIFF IS SURE TO HAVE HEARD ALL THE SHOOTIN', AND HE'LL BE HERE SOON! I'LL LEAVE THIS NOTE, TELLIN' HIM HE'LL FIND THE STOLEN MONEY INSIDE THE CAVE! AS FOR ME, I CAN'T STAY ANY LONGER! I'LL BE OVER THE STATE LINE AFORE THE POSSE GETS HERE!

NO, THE KID COULDN'T STAY ANY LONGER... AND SO HE NEVER DID FIND OUT WHAT HAD TERRIFIED THE OWL-HOOTS, AND CAUSED CALEB TO FALL FROM THE LEDGE! BUT IN THE YEARS THAT FOLLOWED, THE KID NEVER FORGOT! AND HE NEVER STOPPED WONDERING WHETHER THE THREE OUTLAWS MIGHT HAVE OUT-SMARTED THEMSELVES! THEY TRIED TO CONVINCE PEOPLE THAT MIDNIGHT MOUNTAIN WAS HAUNTED... BUT WHAT IF THEY HAD BEEN--

RIGHT???

THE END

THE MAN WHO WOULDN'T FIGHT!

Stan Lee

BELLA GRANDE EMPORIUM

LOOKS LIKE WE GOT A NEWCOMER IN TOWN, BOYS!

YEAH! AND **THIS** ONE LOOKS EVEN MORE SPINELESS THAN THE OTHERS!

SO IT BEGINS AGAIN! EVERY TOWN EVERYWHERE SEEMS TO HAVE THE SAME TYPE OF TROUBLE MAKERS IN IT! MEN WHO WON'T LET A HOMBRE LIVE IN PEACE!

KIRBY 1966 AYERS

WELCOME TO WHIPLASH, MISTER! OR IS IT ALL RIGHT TO CALL SOMEONE **MISTER** WHO DON'T WEAR A GUN?

I'M NOT LOOKIN' FOR TROUBLE, STRANGER!

I'M NO STRANGER, HOMBRE! **YOU** ARE! HAW HAW!

OHHH!

YOU HAD NO CALL TO DO THAT, MISTER!

I DIDN'T EH?

AND JUST WHAT DO **YOU** AIM TO DO ABOUT IT, MISTER **NO-GUN??**

I--I--AIN'T NUTHIN' I CAN DO, I RECKON!

HAW HAW! WATCH YOURSELVES, BOYS! THIS HERE NEWCOMER IS A REAL TIMBER WOLF! HE'S ROUGH AND TOUGH HE IS! A REGULAR BLAZE MOON! HAW HAW HAW!

DON'T LET HIM PROVOKE YOU, STRANGER! HE'S CRAG SMITH, THE BOLDEST HOMBRE IN THESE PARTS, NEXT TO BLAZE MOON!

I'M NOT AIMIN' TO BE PROVOKED FRIEND! BUT THANK YOU FOR THE ADVICE!

HEY! WHAT DID YOU WHISPER TO MISTER NO GUN?

N-NOTHIN', CRAG! I WAS JUST HELPIN' HIM TO HIS FEET, THAT'S ALL!

DON'T **NO ONE** HELP NOBODY WHO CRAG SMITH KNOCKS DOWN, SAVVY??

NO HOLD ON THERE! IT JUST AIN'T RIGHT TO GO AROUND BEATIN' UP FOLKS JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE BIGGER THAN THEY ARE!

WELL WELL! MISTER NO-GUN FOUND HIS VOICE!

MISTER, I'M BIGGER'N ANY MAN IN THESE PARTS, AND I RECKON AIN'T A MAN LIVIN' CAN MAKE ME BACK DOWN, AND THAT GOES FOR BLAZE MOON, TOO!

YOU ONLY SAY THAT, CRAG, BECAUSE YOU KNOW BLAZE MOON IS NOWHERE AROUND HERE! HE AIN'T BEEN HEARD OF FOR YEARS!

NOBODY CAN SAY THAT TO CRAG SMITH! YOU SPOKE ONE TIME TOO MUCH, JASPER!

NO! NO-- CRAG! YUH **WOULDN'T!**

OH YES, I WOULD!

HOLD IT, CRAG!

YOU'VE GONE TOO FAR, MISTER! NOW YOU'RE GONNA HAVE TO **BACK** YOUR PLAY!

WELL WELL THE JELLYFISH IS GONNA FIGHT, EH? AND HERE I WUZ THINKIN' THIS WOULD JUST BE ANOTHER DULL DAY!

ONE OF YOU HOMBRES TOSS THIS CRITTER A GUN! DON'T WORRY, HE WON'T WASTE NONE OF YOUR BULLETS! HAW HAW! I WON'T GIVE 'IM A **CHANCE** TO!

NO NEED FOR THAT!! I'VE GOT MUH **OWN!**

YORE **OWN?** BUT--I THOUGHT--

QUIT BRAGGIN', CRAG! I'VE SEEN HOMBRES LIKE YOU FROM THE RIO GRANDE TO THE TIMBERLANE! YOU AIN'T NEVER HAD A THOUGHT IN YORE WORTHLESS LIFE!

ALL RIGHT, CRAG- LET'S GIT IT OVER WITH FAST! I GOT THINGS TO DO! **SLAP LEATHER!**

WAIT! FIRST TELL ME--

I'M AIMIN' TO **DRAW,** NOT TALK! THE TIME FOR TALK IS PAST! OR DO YUH WANNA CRAWFISH OUT, MISTER?

N-NO--I'LL FIGHT- B-BUT WAIT--

HAH! I MADE YUH LOWER YORE GUARD! **NOW** I'LL BEAT YUH!

A CHEAT TILL THE END, EH, CRAG?

SOMEONE SHOULDA DONE THIS TO YUH A **LONG** TIME AGO, CRAG!

HOW--WHERE'D THE GUN COME FROM??

POW! POW!

YOU AIN'T WORTH WASTIN' ANOTHER BULLET ON!

WHAM!

SOMEONE CARRY THIS USELESS CARGO TO THE EDGE OF TOWN AND DUMP IT THERE! AND TELL HIM IF HE EVER RETURNS, I WON'T BE SO EASY ON HIM AGAIN!

YOU TRY TO LIVE PEACEFUL AND THERE'S ALWAYS SOME LOUD-MOUTHED BRAINLESS FOOL WHO WON'T LET YOU! WHEN WILL THEY LEARN? WHEN WILL THEY EVER LEARN?

BLAZE MOON

THE END

CONTINUED

with one," the sheriff said. "He's never had to; he makes sure he doesn't." Clerihew grinned. "You know, Clark, now I think we can both stop worrying."

"I wish I could," Clark said worriedly. "Well, I've officially notified the law . . . you . . . I've certified the value of the gold dust. And when old Stan rolls up and loads it, it'll be out of my hands."

"Yes, it'll be Stan's responsibility, then." The sheriff's face brightened. "He's one of the cleverest men I ever knew. Well, if this shipment gets through, there'll be absolutely nothing to worry about in the future. There's only isolated owlhoots in these parts. It would take a bigger gang than Blucher County's ever seen to stop a train."

And he left the office.

The stagecoach was scheduled to leave at exactly seven o'clock in the morning. At seven-five it would pull up in front of the assay office, already loaded with passengers, some of whom were going along for the honor of being on the last ride of the famous old carrier.

It was a bright morning. The coach left the Goldbank Hotel terminal, trotted down the street, turned in at a cross lane and then paused in front of the assay office. Stan walked in through the door and was observed by the passengers to also go behind the steel door that shut the vault room off from the office section.

He returned empty-handed.

Getting aboard the Coach, Old Stan picked up the reins, shouted out a hearty "Giddyap!" and the coach started out once more.

As it headed back toward the main street of Goldbank and then out into open country, the passengers inside discussed the unusual fact that Stan had not loaded the gold aboard the coach. They guessed the gold dust shipment had been called off.

"That's it," one of the passengers said (for it was quite true as the sheriff had pointed out, that the news of the shipment had become common knowledge). "The shipment was probably canceled . . . probably considered too risky."

"I've never seen a stagecoach holdup," another passenger said. "But if there was ever a chance for one, this was it . . . the last chance any owlhoot in these parts will ever have to snatch a coach shipment."

"You don't suppose the gold's just been hidden in the coach, do you?" the first speaker asked, and glanced round the other five faces in the seats.

"Where would it be hidden?" a third passenger asked. "There's no room to hide it; there's no baggage, this trip. And Stan would know that if he did hide it, any dry-gulcher would just have to search and find it."

The coach rolled on through the pleasant early April weather. Birds sang in the cottonwoods. From time to time a herd of cattle or sheep appeared on the distant horizon and were left behind. Then came long, lonely deserted stretches with plenty of big tumbled boulders behind which owlhoots might be in hiding.

But nothing happened.

At exactly nine-thirty the coach rolled into Ellentown, discharged the passengers and then headed for the Ellentown bank. At ten o'clock exactly, scrip was being handed out over the counters . . . and the big cash shortage at the bank was over. The gold dust had arrived!

Sheriff Clerihew told his deputy how old Stan had done it, a day later, when the news got back.

"Stan knew that no matter what he did, there might be an attempt, so he decided to try what he finally did try. He knew, first, that owlhoots, if any, would be watching the coach loading. He even figured they might have searched the coach during the night, just in case Stan had gotten the gold dust from Clark beforehand, and hidden it in the coach. Then he knew that, not finding any gold hidden, they'd be watching the assay office. But he left the assay office empty-handed . . . and anybody watching must have reasoned, as the passengers did, hat the shipment had been called off."

"But it hadn't," the deputy said, puzzled.

"No, it hadn't," the Sheriff grinned. "Stan really had done what was the only thing that could have been done. He'd arranged with Clark to give him the gold dust beforehand . . . and then he'd hidden it on the coach. Only it was hidden cleverly, so that nobody could have found it. The rest was just stage-acting."

"But *where* did he hide it?" The deputy asked.

"In the horse-feed bags! Stan just mixed the gold dust with the feed. He drove all the way to Ellentown without more than a few minutes stop anywhere . . . and then drove to the bank. A few minutes in a blazing oven . . . and that feed just burned away, leaving the gold dust!"

THE END J-704

KID COLT OUTLAW

THE LEGEND OF KID COLT... YEARS AGO KID COLT KILLED AN OUTLAW IN SELF-DEFENSE! BUT BEING YOUNG AND FOOLISH, HE FLED, INSTEAD OF STAYING TO STAND TRIAL! SINCE THEN, HE HAS SPENT HIS LIFE TRYING TO ATONE FOR HIS MISTAKE!

IT SEEMED TO BE A DAY LIKE ANY OTHER DAY! THE DUSTY STAGE WAS RATTLING ALONG THE NARROW ROAD TO ABILINE WITH FOUR SILENT OCCUPANTS! EXCEPT FOR THE OLD MAN AND HIS DAUGHTER, THEY WERE ALL STRANGERS TO EACH OTHER. BUT **ONE** OF THEM WAS **KID COLT**--AND THAT MEANT..DISASTER!

I JUST RECOGNIZED THIS MAN! HE'S **KID COLT**, THE WANTED OUTLAW! STOP THE STAGE, I SAY!

PUT THAT GUN AWAY, YUH FOOL!

FATHER!

THERE THERE, CHILD! DON'T WORRY! IT'LL BE ALL RIGHT!

"THE MAN WHO HATED KID COLT!"

I HATE TO **DO** THIS, BUT **NOBODY** POINTS A GUN AT KID COLT-- **NOBODY!**

OWW!

WHOA THERE! WHOAAA! WHAT'S GOIN' **ON** DOWN THERE?

WHAT'S THE RUCKUS HERE?

THANK GOODNESS YOU HAVE THAT GUN, DRIVER! I JUST RECOGNIZED THIS MAN! HE'S **KID COLT!** YOU'VE GOT TO PUT HIM OFF THE STAGE, BEFORE HE MURDERS US ALL!

MISTER, I PAID MY FARE FOR THIS TRIP TO ABILINE JUST LIKE ANY-ONE ELSE! THERE'S NO WARRANT FOR ME IN THIS STATE, SO YOU **CAN'T** PUT ME OFF!

HE'S **RIGHT,** MISTER TALBOT!

B-BUT IF HE'S A KILLER, LIKE MR. TALBOT SAYS--YOU **CAN'T** MAKE US RIDE WITH HIM!

EASY, GIRL!

DON'T WORRY, MA'AM! I PROMISE YOU I'LL CAUSE NO TROUBLE! I DON'T RECKON I'M AS BAD AS **SOME** FOLKS SAY I AM!

WELL, THAT'S THAT! NOW LET'S FINISH OUR TRIP WITH NO MORE TROUBLE!

THAT DRIVER IS A **FOOL!** I'VE MET MEN OF **YOUR** ILK BEFORE, COLT! YOU'RE NOT FIT TO MINGLE WITH DECENT FOLK! I, FOR ONE, WON'T TAKE MY EYES OFF YOU!

SUIT YOURSELF, MISTER! AS FOR ME, I'M GETTIN' SOME SHUT-EYE!

AS SOON AS HE'S ASLEEP, ONE OF US HAS TO GET HIS GUN!

BUT HE'S NOT HARMIN' ANYONE!

YOU FOOL! A MAN LIKE KID COLT DOESN'T RIDE A STAGE WITHOUT A **REASON!** HE'S PROBABLY PLANNING TO ROB **ALL** OF US, FIRST CHANCE HE GETS! IF YOU WON'T HELP ME, I'LL FINISH HIM OFF **MYSELF!**

HE DIDN'T WANT TO SLEEP! HE KNEW HE WAS IN DANGER FROM THE MAN CALLED TALBOT! BUT THE KID HAD BEEN ON THE TRAIL FOR TWO NIGHTS, WITHOUT SHUTTING HIS EYES, AND HE JUST COULDN'T HOLD OUT ANY LONGER! AND SO, SCANT MINUTES LATER...

NOW'S MY CHANCE!

THIS ISN'T MURDER! THERE'S A PRICE ON HIS HEAD IN **OTHER** STATES! I WON'T ALLOW AN ACCIDENT OF LOCATION TO SPARE THIS HEARTLESS CRIMINAL!

STOP! YOU CAN'T!

GET UP, MR. COLT! GET **UP!**

HUH?

I'M AN OLD MAN, BUT I WON'T LET YOU DO A VICIOUS THING LIKE THAT!

YOU FOOL! LET GO!

YOU CAN'T LEAD THE LIFE OF A HUNTED MAN, WITHOUT YOUR INSTINCTS BECOMING AS SHARP AND LIGHTNING-FAST AS A PUMA'S! IN ONE SECOND, KID COLT WAS AWAKE, HAD SIZED UP THE SITUATION, AND WAS IN ACTION!

I'LL TAKE OVER NOW!

WHAP!

WHAM

NOW SIT UP, TALBOT! I'M GONNA GIVE YOU A BETTER CHANCE THAN YOU GAVE ME!

WH-WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?

DIDN'T I WARN YOU TWO NOT TO MAKE ME HAVE TO STOP THE STAGE AGAIN! I GOTTA MIND TO...

DROP THAT GUN, DRIVER! PRONTO!

GET OUT, TALBOT!

I TRIED TO WARN YOU! ALL OF YOU! I TOLD YOU HE'D ROB THE STAGE AND MURDER ALL OF US! BUT YOU WOULDN'T LISTEN!

DON'T SHOOT, KID! I'LL DROP IT!

LOOK, COMING THIS WAY! A DEPUTY! THE KID MEANS TO HOLD US HOSTAGES! SHOOT HIM, SOMEONE! HE CAN'T STAND UP TO **ALL** OF US!

SHUT YOUR MOUTH, TALBOT!

THAT'S WHY I WANTED THE STAGE STOPPED! I SAW THAT DEPUTY ON THE TRAIL! I **WANT** HIM!

YOU'VE GOT TO STOP HIM! HE'LL KILL THE DEPUTY, **TOO!** HE PROBABLY WANTS TO STEAL HIS BADGE! BUT **I** WON'T LET HIM!

IT'S TOO LATE FOR TRICKS, HOMBRE! YOUR NUMBER'S UP NOW!

WHAT'S GOIN' ON HERE?

WHAP!

I'VE GOT SOMEONE FOR YOU, LAWMAN! THIS GENT CALLS HIMSELF TALBOT, BUT I THINK YOU'LL RECOGNIZE HIM BETTER UNDER THE NAME OF SAM CANTRELL!

SAM CANTRELL! HALF THE STATE'S BEEN LOOKIN' FOR HIM! HE'S THE JASPER WHO PULLED THE FARGO GOLD SHIPMENT JOB LAST WEEK!

THAT'S RIGHT, AND HE WAS PROBABLY PLANNING TO ROB **THIS** STAGE NEXT! HE MUST HAVE KNOWN I RECOGNIZED HIM, SO HE TRIED TO MAKE THESE FOLKS SHOOT **ME** BEFORE I COULD GIVE HIM AWAY! IT WAS A GOOD TRY, CANTRELL, BUT **NOT** GOOD **ENOUGH!**

AND WE ALMOST THOUGHT **YOU** WERE OUT TO ROB US! OH, WHAT FOOLS WE WERE!

I FORGOT TO ASK... WHO **WAS** THAT HOMBRE WHO CAUGHT CANTRELL?

LET'S JUST SAY HE WAS A **FRIEND,** DEPUTY!

THE KIND OF FRIEND I HOPE **EVERY** PERSON WILL FIND, IN THEIR HOUR OF NEED!

THE END